

GYRMLAK TREE

- ▶ **Height:** 30ft
- ▶ **Classification:** Eccentric
- ▶ **Life expectancy:** 20 years



The word gyrmlak is a combination of the Greek word for round - *gýros* - and the Arabic for giant - *eimlaq*. This is a reference to the large, round leaves that make this tree so distinctive. Gyrmlaks have a unique and valued place in kasulam culture, owing to the unique habitat they provide.



The gyrmlak is a moderate-sized tree that grows on hillsides in wet, tropical areas. It is an evergreen and grows enormous, bright yellow leaves - most are 6ft from stem to tip.

They produce spores on the undersides of their leaves, and these spread in two ways: either by being carried further down the hillside in rain run-off, or by being kept dry by the leaves until the rain stops, when the wind carries them further up the hill.

Like all succulents, gyrmlaks do not thrive in a wet environment. The adult plants prevent themselves from being over-watered by shielding the ground from the majority of the rain, and this in turn protects their seedlings, which are not yet able to adequately shelter themselves. The warmth of the locations they grow in causes the humidity to stay high, and this is enough to keep the young plants hydrated.

Medical Conditions

There are no medical conditions associated with gyrmlak trees.



Geographical Distribution



Gyrmlaks thrive on hillsides in warm, wet climates. Rather oxymoronicly, they also require dry soil, which creates something of a conundrum for these plants. Adult plants resolve this by shielding the ground from the majority of the rain and redirecting it elsewhere.

For this reason, rainfall on gyrmlak-rich hillsides is invariably redirected to the bottom of the hill, where it creates a wetland, river, or lake. Gyrmlak forests therefore usually occur next to bodies of fresh water.



Position in Ecosystem



Gyrmlak trees tend to discourage the growth of other plants by preventing sunlight from reaching the ground. Therefore, where there are Gyrmlak trees, there tend not to be many other plant species around.

This tree is very effective at blocking and redirecting rain from reaching the ground, so the ground beneath gyrmlaks tends to be dry and suitable for animals to burrow in. For this reason, both small and larger burrowing animals favour gyrmlak forests.



History



The gyrmlak first came to the attention of the kasulam community when they heard of it via another sapient species that had spotted the trees on their migrations. The kasulam had recently developed a new genetic strain that caused some of their young to be born with bright yellow skin, and the yellow individuals had great difficulty camouflaging themselves. Albino kasulam, who had photo-sensitive eyes, had even greater difficulty surviving and often needed help to find enough food. Mortality rates were significantly higher for yellow kasulam, pink-eyed or not, as a result.

When the kasulam heard of the gyrmlak forests they went to assess them for possible new settlement sites, and discovered that they were perfect: the ground around their roots was dry, their fallen leaves were big enough to resemble a yellow kasulam curled up in a ball, and there was always a body of water nearby which would provide a community with plentiful food and drink. In short, for yellow kasulam, gyrmlak forests are a paradise!



This species of tree has a bitter-sweet, though ultimately positive, position in kasulam and mukash culture.

Food

Gyrmlak trees do not directly provide animals with food. Their leaves are tough and unpleasant to eat, and they discourage other plants from growing, so a gyrmlak forest can, in and of itself, feel like a rather barren monoculture.

However, these trees funnel rainwater downhill, which forms bodies of water, and this gives the local flora and fauna a boost. There is usually a river, lake, or wetland at the foot of a hillside of gyrmlak trees, which provide ample opportunities to feed.

Art

Kasulam consider these trees a literal life-saver, thanks to the near-perfect habitat they provide for yellow kasulam (particularly unstriped, non-mottled, non-diluted ones). The large leaves, which strategically prevent sunlight from reaching the ground, also provide excellent shade for pink-eyed kasulam, who otherwise tend to find that forest canopies create uncomfortable levels of contrast, 'twinkle', and glare.

For these reasons kasulam love them, and pay tribute to them in their art.

However, as only a very specific type of kasulam benefits from living in a gyrmlak forest, they are also a symbol of permanent parting, of goodbye. It is the sorrow of a

permanent farewell and the hope of a better, safer life for the departing kasulam, that provide these trees with their symbolic power.

The trees, with their huge leaves and large trunks and branches, are easy to draw. Gyrlmaks are considered to be responsible for the kasulams' love of seeping curves in their artwork.

Language

Kasulam sometimes call these trees "Paradise trees".

Politics

Gyrlmak forests provide a refuge for kasulam who are otherwise potentially doomed. As living in such forests serves yellow/pink-eyed kasulam far better than any other, they provide a sense of being something of a sole stronghold for these individuals. Gyrlmak settlements don't tend to come under attack, but the kasulam and the mukash who live there feel protective of their settlement.

Families of yellow/pink-eyed kasulam take a bitter-sweet view of the gyrlmak settlements, as their existence means that non-yellow/pink-eyed family members must say goodbye to their loved ones, but know that they are travelling to a safer place.

Economy

Gyrlmak trees tend not to contribute to the economy.

Money / Trading System

Gyrlmak trees do not provide any commodities, per se. Instead, they provide a unique habitat. However, neither land nor burrows within that land are considered property, as the kasulam and mukash live communally and consider burrows to belong to everyone.

As gyrmak settlements take up only a tiny portion of the forest, there is plenty of scope for them to be expanded, so when there are too many individuals for a burrow to accommodate, it is simply expanded.

Medicine

Gyrmak trees have no noted medicinal properties.

Credits

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy